# NATO Military Commission Chairman and Others Back Ukraine's Use of Long-Range Weapons to Attack Russia

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**Russia Ukraine War Military Aid**

FILE - NATO Military Committee Chairman Admiral Rob Bauer listens during the plenary meeting of the Seoul Defense Dialogue in Seoul, South Korea, Sept. 11, 2024.
(AP Photo/Lee Jin-man, File)
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PRAGUE (AP) — The head of NATO's military committee said Saturday that Ukraine has the solid legal and military right to strike deep inside Russia to gain a combat advantage - which reflects the beliefs of some US allies — even as the Biden administration is reluctant to let Kiev do so using American-made weapons.

“Every nation that is attacked has the right to defend itself. And that right does not stop at your own national border,” said Adm. Rob Bauer, speaking at the end of the committee’s annual meeting, which was also attended by U.S. Gen. CQ Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Bauer, from the Netherlands, added that countries have the sovereign right to impose restrictions on the weapons they send to Ukraine. But Lieutenant General Karel ÿehka, chief of the General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces, made it clear that his country does not impose such arms restrictions on Kiev.

“We believe that Ukrainians themselves should decide how to use it,” ÿehka said.

Their comments came as US President Joe Biden weighs whether to allow Ukraine to use US-supplied long-range weapons to strike deep inside Russia, and they hint at divisions over the issue.

Biden met British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Friday, following this week's visit to Kiev by their top diplomats, who came under new pressure to ease arms restrictions.

US officials familiar with the conversations said they believed Starmer was seeking Biden's approval to allow Ukraine to use British Storm Shadow missiles for expanded strikes on Russia.

Biden’s approval may be needed because parts of Storm Shadow are made in the U.S. The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to share the status of private discussions, said they are confident Biden will cooperate, but no decision has been made.

Providing additional support and training to Ukraine was a major topic at the NATO leaders' meeting, but it was unclear Saturday whether the debate over the U.S. restrictions was raised.

Many European countries are strongly supporting Ukraine, partly because they fear becoming the next victim of a more powerful Russia.

Opening the meeting, Czech President Petr Pavel urged the military leaders gathered in the room to “be courageous and open in expressing your assessments and recommendations. The rounder and softer they are, the less they will be understood by the political level.”

The allies, he said, must “take the right steps and the right decisions to protect our countries and our way of life.”

Military leaders routinely develop plans and recommendations that are then sent to NATO's civilian defense secretaries for discussion. These plans are then sent to the leaders of the countries within the alliance.

US allows Ukraine to receive US-supplied weapons to be used in cross-border attacks to attack

Russian forces. But it does not allow Kiev to fire long-range missiles, such as ATACMS, deep into Russia.

The US has argued that Ukraine has drones that can strike far and should use ATACMS wisely because it has a limited number of them.

Ukraine has increasingly urged Washington to lift restrictions, especially as winter approaches and Kiev worries about Russian gains during the colder months.

"You want to weaken the enemy that is attacking you to not only combat the arrows that are coming at you, but also to engage the archer that, as we see, very often operates from Russia into Ukraine," Bauer said. "So militarily, there is a good reason to do that, to weaken the enemy, to weaken his logistical lines, fuel, ammunition that is coming forward. That is what you want to stop, if at all possible."

Brown told reporters traveling with him to the meeting that U.S. policy on long-range weapons remains unchanged.

But, he added, “what we want to do at the same time is – regardless of that policy – continue to make Ukraine successful with the capabilities that have been provided” by the US and other countries in the coalition, as well as the weapons that Kiev itself has been able to build.

“They've proven to be quite effective at building unmanned aerial vehicles and drones,” Brown told reporters traveling with him to meetings in Europe.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has made similar points, arguing that one weapons system is not decisive for the success of a war.

"There are a number of things that go into the overall equation of whether or not you know you want to offer one option or the other," Austin said Friday. "There's no silver bullet when it comes to these types of things."

He also noted that Ukraine has already been able to invade Russia with its own domestically produced systems, including drones.